

WEST FORK & SULA RANGER DISTRICT

2008 PRESCRIBED FIRE & FUELS PROJECTS

The West Fork and Sula Ranger Districts on the Bitterroot National Forest has several prescribed fire and fuels projects approved for implementation during the spring and fall of 2008, depending on weather and fuel conditions. A short description of these projects and their puposes are provided below.

Underburning: usually takes place during the spring when larger diameter downed trees, limbs, etc. are still moist, but smaller fuels like grass and needles are dry enough to support fire and be consumed.

- * **Maintain forest health:** Fire exclusion has altered the size, number, and type of trees in the proposed project areas. Historically, these sites were characterized by larger Ponderosa Pine and Larch in an open park-like environment. These species are slowly being replaced by thickets of Douglas-fir and Grand fir trees, which compete for water and nutrients with the larger Ponderosa Pines and Grand Fir. As these trees become stressed, they become susceptible to insects and disease, and less resistant to wildfire.
- * **Improve wildlife habitat:** The lack of periodic low intensity fires has caused brush and grasses to become less nutritious, unpalatable, and less available to wildlife. Many plant species respond quickly to fire, sprouting from root systems deep in the ground, providing new food for wildlife.
- * **Post harvest slash treatment:** Reduce residual slash from harvest activities to reduce fire danger and prepare sites for new tree regeneration.
- * **Reduce the potential of large, high intensity wildfire:** The lower elevation areas historically burned on a 5-20 year interval, allowing Ponderosa Pine and Larch to thrive. The lack of periodic fires over the past century due to fire exclusion is changing the make up of the Forest to Douglas-fir and other fire-sensitive tree species. These species increase the possibility of severe wildfires.
- * **Safety:** As the potential for larger, higher intensity wildfire increases, so do the risks to firefighter, private landowner, and forest user safety.

Pile Burning: usually takes place during the late fall when surrounding vegetation is moist enough to curtail fire spread. Occurs in areas that have been previously slashed; a process in which smaller fuels are thinned to reduce tree density and the "ladder fuel" effect.

PROJECTS: (UB: underburn; PB: pile burn)

West Fork Ranger District:

Hughes Malloy #1C - 120 acres (Spring/Fall UB)	Hughes Malloy 2B - 64 acres (Spring/Fall UB)
Hughes Malloy #6 - 82 acres (Spring/Fall UB)	Hughes Malloy #7 - 72 acres (Spring UB)
Hughes Malloy #1B - 137 acres (Spring/Fall UB)	Halford B. C (SPA) - 30 acres (landings/Fall PB)
School Point Frontline - 172 acres (Fall PB)	PRW #10 - 235 acres (Fall UB)
Beaverwoods # 31, 32 - 90 acres (slash Spring/Fall UB)	Hughes Creek Plantation - 138 acre (Fall UB)
Frazier A - 13 acres (Spring/Fall UB)	Frazier B - 45 acres (Spring/Fall UB)
Frazier #4 - 26 acres (Spring/Fall UB)	

Sula Ranger District:

Middle East Fork #64 - 87 acres (Spring/Fall UB)	Middle East Fork #62 - 450 acres (Spring/Fall UB)
Guide #60 - 166 acres (Spring/Fall UB)	Guide #326 - 252 acres (Spring/Fall UB)

Contact Persons: For additional information contact: Stu Hoyt or Jacquie Parks; District Fire Management Officers, West Fork Ranger District, 6735 West Fork Road, Darby, MT 59829. 406/821-3269. John Hawkins or Lee McAlpine, District Fire Management Officers, Sula Ranger District, 7338 HWY 93 South, Sula, MT 59871.

Ravalli County Commissioners

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